THE SLAVONIC AND EAST EUROPEAN REVIEW

Volume 76, Number 1—January 1998

The Belly of the Whale Revisited: The History and Literature Surrounding a Character in Terts's *Spokoinoi nochi*

KEVIN WINDLE

В романе надо героя, а тут *нарочно*
собраны все черты для антигероя.
F. M. Dostoevskii, *Записки из подполья*

Смею заверить, что все это лажа.
S. G. Khmel'nitskii

READERS of *émigré* Russian literary journals from the 1970s to the mid-1990s and of those published in Russia during and after *perestroika* could not fail to be struck by the animosity prevailing among exiled writers, much of it focused round the figure of Andrei Siniavskii. Far from making common cause against the regime which had condemned them to a life of exile, a number of writers engaged in ill-tempered polemics in the pages of *Sintaksis*, *Kontinent*, *Grani*, *Russkaia mysl'* and other widely respected periodicals. Siniavskii and Vladimir Maksimov, and their respective supporters, exchanged charges and rebuttals, and legal action was sometimes but a step away. What might have been a unified dissident community was riven by internal dissension too deep to be overcome, whatever the need for common action. The rift was not healed with the demise of the USSR; on the contrary, it re-ignited with

Kevin Windle is Senior Lecturer in Russian in the Department of Modern European Languages at the Australian National University in Canberra.

The author would like to express his gratitude to Vladimir Kabo for his interest in this project and for much invaluable background information, and to Martin Dewhirst and Igor' Golomshtock for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

renewed passion when *Kontinent* was relocated to Moscow. Nor did it conclude with the emergence of certain KGB documents and a subsequent apology from Maksimov shortly before his death in 1995. Indeed, despite the evidence of these documents, much contumely resounded in public statements in the days following Siniavskii's death in February 1997.

Given the intensity of this dispute, the passions that it aroused, and the fact that its protagonists occupy such an important place in Russian literature of the twentieth century, its history and the literature surrounding it clearly merit some study. This article will survey the background to the bitterest of the disputes surrounding Siniavskii — as bitter as any in the annals of Russian literature — and more particularly the development of this background as reflected in a variety of literary forms. Central to this story is the charge that Siniavskii was a long-serving agent of the Soviet security organs and that he continued to work for them in Paris after his prison term in Mordovia. A key figure behind this accusation is Siniavskii's one-time friend Sergei Grigor'evich Khmel'nitskii, who emerged from obscurity to take an active part in the rancorous public exchanges of the mid-1980s.

The importance of Khmel'nitskii here is difficult to overstate. Twenty years after the notorious trial of Siniavskii (Abram Terts) and Daniel' (Nikolai Arzhak) his pivotal role in the past of both writers began to emerge, and it became clear that, if there had been no Sergei Khmel'nitskii, Daniel''s literary corpus would have been somewhat slimmer, he and Siniavskii might well have eluded the KGB for longer than they did, and Terts-Siniavskii's later novel *Spokoinoi nochi* would have been a very different book.[1] We could add that Siniavskii's earliest formation as a student of poetry would have been less intensive and rigorous, he and Daniel' might never have met, he might not have met and married Mar'ia Rozanova-Kruglikova,[2] the curricula vitae of Iurii Bregel' and Vladimir Kabo might have been very different, and the memoirs of the latter would probably have been the story of an uninterrupted academic career.

The body of writing, fictional and non-fictional, surrounding the figure of Khmel'nitskii is now sufficiently extensive to amount to a larger-than-life portrait of a figure almost more symbolic than real, bringing out the features of a brilliant member of the artistic intelligentsia and servant of the Soviet regime. The collective portrait has all the makings of an iconic image, an adult and more venal

[1] Abram Terts, *Spokoinoi nochi*, Paris, 1984.

[2] Khmel'nitskii refers facetiously to these introductions as being among his gravest sins: S. G. Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', *Dvadtsat' dva*, 48, 1986, p. 152. This article is also the source of the second epigraph (ibid., p. 153). The editor of the journal, Aleksandr Voronel', supplied a Preface entitled 'Pravo byt' uslyshannym', ibid., pp. 145–51.

development of his predecessor Pavlik Morozov, who occupied a prominent position in the cultural baggage of all Soviet citizens from an early date.[3] Informers, denunciation and betrayal have long held a fascination for Russian writers, not only in the Soviet period. Pushkin's works contain references to an earlier antecedent, less celebrated in literature, the novelist, critic and informer of the Third Section, Faddei Bulgarin, with whom he came into conflict, and we may note Griboedov's sly addition to his translation of Goethe's Faust, 'Здесь озираются во мраке подлецы,/Чтоб слово подстеречь и погубить доносом', an apparent reference to his own social environment.[4]

It is true, of course, that much of the material published in the literary press as this story unfolded was more personal than literary, but since the participants were all steeped in the Russian literary tradition and a literary work (*Spokoinoi nochi*) provided a focus, it may be treated as a literary event and a small cluster of related and interlocking literary works as its product. In addition to *Spokoinoi nochi*, the following works of literature bear on this story in greater or lesser degree and contribute in some way to a composite portrait of Khmel'nitskii from a variety of perspectives: 'Govorit Moskva' and 'Iskuplenie' by Iulii Daniel', a series of poems by Sergei Khmel'nitskii himself, and Vladimir Kabo's *Doroga v Avstraliiu*.[5] This article will attempt a study of the resulting image, that is, the composite portrait as viewed from a number of angles, as a literary figure with clear lines of continuity from a number of nineteenth-century literary characters: in Kabo's words 'a hero of our time'. Rather as Pechorin is seen from different viewpoints, including his own, so Khmel'nitskii appears before us as seen from four different angles, in literary genres as varied as the novel, the short story, poetry and memoirs. He remained, however, an anonymous presence

[3] In this connection, the spirit of Pavlik Morozov is invoked in Terts, *Spokoinoi nochi*, pp. 354–55. For comment on the Morozov story and its importance in the Russian mind, see, for example, Susan Richards, *Epics of Everyday Life: Encounters in a Changing Russia*, Harmondsworth, 1990, pp. 308–09, and Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, Chicago, IL, 1981, *passim*.

[4] See Pushkin's 'O zapiskakh Vidoka': A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomakh*, Moscow, 1962–66, VIII, pp. 147–48 and notes on pp. 679–80; see also D. P. Costello's notes to his edition of A. S. Griboedov, *Gore ot uma*, Oxford, 1951, p. 182.

[5] Nikolai Arzhak, *Povesti i rasskazy*, New York, 1966; Yuli Daniel (Nikolai Arzhak), *This Is Moscow Speaking, and Other Stories*, trans. Stuart Hood, Harold Shukman and John Richardson, with a Foreword by Max Hayward, London, 1968; poems by Sergei Khmel'nitskii, *Dvadtsat' dva*, 48, 1986, pp. 181–87; and Vladimir Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, New York, 1995 (to be published in English in 1997 by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, trans. Rosh Ireland and Kevin Windle with support from the Australia Council Literature Board). A useful summary of the Kabo–Bregel' and Siniavskii–Daniel' stories is given by Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in Post-Stalin Russia*, Boston, MA, 1990. Khmel'nitskii was also the subject of some notes made by Daniel' in Vladimir prison *c.* 1970, during the last months of his sentence. These apparently remain unpublished except for a fragment quoted in his 'Eksgumatsiia predatelia', *Vremia i my*, 93, 1986, pp. 205–09 (p. 206).

for the greater part of his career, only rarely named in print before 1986, when he voluntarily and publicly identified himself as the 'Serezha' of *Spokoinoi nochi*.

A larger number of writings which appeared in response to the above named, or in response to the responses, will also receive some consideration here, although their authors did not, for the most part, intend them as literature or literary criticism.

Beyond briefly setting out what appear to be the undisputed facts, I shall make little attempt to separate the fictional from the biographical or autobiographical, being more concerned with the symbolic creation. Hélène Peltier-Zamoyska has given a rare reminder that one of the key sources, *Spokoinoi nochi*, is subtitled 'a novel',[6] and the author retains the conspiratorial alias used mainly for his fiction, Abram Terts, although the first-person narrator is called Siniavskii.[7] Beth Holmgren is right, however, to refer to it as 'an ontological hybrid — a fictional memoir, a novel autobiography'.[8] Khmel'nitskii, in his response, ignores the question of genre, as well he might, as so much of the work is clearly based on fact, and makes liberal use of terms such as лажа, фуфло, мура, вопиющая клевета and кошмароподобная ложь, not usually valid in the discussion of fiction.

In *Spokoinoi nochi* Siniavskii found the ideal vehicle with which to set forth his view of the Stalinist period and of Stalin himself as he had sketched them in his earlier writing, especially in his essay 'Literaturnyi protsess v Rossii'.[9] Here Stalin is seen as a manipulator and magician with a gift for the compelling metaphor, a genius for the theatrical, with an ability to elevate evil to new heights of poetry and art. Siniavskii alludes to the fascinating and paradoxical relationship between the

[6] 'Pis'mo Elen Zamoiska (Pel't'e) Andreiu Siniavskomu', *Vremia i my*, 91, 1986, pp. 222–23 (p. 222).

[7] Several authors, including Siniavskii/Terts himself (*Spokoinoi nochi*, pp. 17–19), have spoken of the relationship between Siniavskii and Terts. See also Irena Brežná, 'Rozhovor s Andrejom Siňavským-Tercom', *Svědectví*, 21, 1987, 82, pp. 407–14 (an English version, 'An Interview with Andrei Sinyavsky' appeared in *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 3, 1989, 2, pp. 51–60, translated from the Slovak by Kevin Windle); Andrew Durkin, 'Narrator, Metaphor, and Theme in Sinjavskij's "Fantastic Tales"', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 24, 1980, 2, pp. 133–44 ; Markéta Brousková, 'Dobrou noc, aneb kam se poděl Abram Terc', *Svědectví*, 21, 1987, 82, pp. 385–94; Aleksandr Genis, 'Beseda vtoraia: Pravda duraka. Andrei Siniavskii', *Zvezda*, 1997, 3, pp. 231–34. It is not my intention to comment further on this question and hereafter the names 'Siniavskii' and 'Daniel'' will be used in preference to 'Terts' and 'Arzhak' except where bibliographical or other considerations dictate otherwise.

[8] Beth Holmgren, 'The Transfiguring of Context in the Work of Abram Terts' (hereafter 'The Transfiguring of Context'), *Slavic Review*, 50, 1991, 4, p. 970.

[9] Abram Terts, 'Literaturnyi protsess v Rossii', *Kontinent*, 1, 1974, p. 160. These ideas are further developed in his article 'Stalin — geroi i khudozhnik stalinskoi epokhi', *Sintaksis*, 19, 1987, pp. 106–25, a chapter of a subsequent book, *Osnovy sovetskoi tsivilizatsii*, published in English as Andrei Sinyavsky, *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*, trans. Joanne Turnbull, New York, 1990.

tyrant and the artist displayed in Stalin's dealings with Bulgakov and Pasternak, and to the role of Woland in the life of the Master.

In the novel this perception is elaborated more fully. In the seemingly endless Stalinist night the corrupt and conscienceless intellectual — in Matich's phrase, an 'evil genius, reifying the demonic artistry of High Stalinism' — finds a natural home, entering with gusto into the spirit of the period and denouncing his friends as part of a game.[10] The author is clearly intrigued by the concept of the Faustian pact with the prevalent malign spirit, a pact of a kind which had touched his own life and which is set forth in his novel. It is clear that the ramifications of any such compromise, however intended and whatever its form, are all too likely to include charges of betrayal.

Betrayal in numerous variations looms large in this story, as will be seen. Indeed, it forms a theme which runs through and animates much of it. A summary consisting of a series of betrayals would give a reasonably accurate picture: Khmel'nitskii entraps and denounces Kabo and Bregel'; the interrogator Odlianitskii betrays his source to Kabo and Bregel'; in Khmel'nitskii's view, Kabo and Bregel' betray him by exposing him publicly; Siniavskii and Hélène deceive and betray Khmel'nitskii; Siniavskii betrays the trust of his MGB handler but is perceived by some to have betrayed his natural allies by entering into a compact with the 'organs'. Further acts of greater or lesser, real and suspected betrayal may be identified.

Siniavskii was clearly acutely aware of his own vulnerability — of the danger that his own long-hidden past would provide ammunition for his detractors — in writing a novel which has been described as 'confessional'.[11] Nothing shows this more clearly than his hesitation over the end-point of his novel: should he include the scarcely credible and self-incriminating Vienna episode or remain silent about it?[12] In the end he did include it in the published text, and Khmel'nitskii took full advantage of this in his rejoinder.[13]

As *Spokoinoi nochi* has already received its share of expert critical attention, this study will concentrate on the lesser known works, the smaller genres and the most recent contribution to this tale, the Kabo memoirs of 1995. First, however, it is necessary to summarize the facts of the story which gave rise to these varied works of literature.

Shorn of interpretation, the facts of the story are as follows: Sergei Khmel'nitskii, a child of the Moscow intelligentsia, went to school with

[10] Olga Matich, '*Spokojnoj noči*: Andrej Sinjavskij's Rebirth as Abram Terc' (hereafter 'Spokojnoj noči'), *Slavic and East European Journal*, 33, 1989, pp. 50–63 (p. 56).
[11] Ibid., p. 52.
[12] See Holmgren, 'The Transfiguring of Context', p. 970, for details of an unpublished version.
[13] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', pp. 177–80.

Siniavskii from 1933 and was friendly with him from that date. In his teens, Khmel'nitskii also grew close to Vladimir Kabo, who provides the following brief description: he had 'pale, slightly hollow cheeks, full lips, dark hair brushed back [. . .] and searching, malevolent eyes'.[14] Siniavskii offers a more Gogolian portrait, best cited in the original:

> Подбородок. Волевое, копьем, лицо, от Гумилева. Истинный ассириец. Бронзовый, немного у коршуна, нос. Багрицкий. Очки. Глазницы. Круглые бедра. Объемистый таз. Коротенькие ножки. Миниатюрные ступни (десятый размер ботинка). Все, что требуется от мужчины, от женщины, — он все совмещал. Андрогин.[15]

Like Kabo, Khmel'nitskii was evacuated from Moscow when it seemed the city would fall to the Germans. Their friendship was resumed in 1945 or 1946, soon after Siniavskii and Kabo returned from war service. (Khmel'nitskii himself had not been conscripted into the army.) Khmel'nitskii's friendship with Iurii Bregel', a close friend of Kabo, dates from about this period, when all these four were students in Moscow. Khmel'nitskii, whose father had been an architect, studied at the Institute of Architecture. He and Daniel' became acquainted a little later.

In 1948, Siniavskii and Khmel'nitskii were separately recruited by the security police to spy on and entrap their friend Hélène Peltier, a French student then studying in Moscow, where her father was the naval attaché at the embassy. Whereas Siniavskii secretly, and at great risk, disclosed the plot to Hélène, and escaped deeper involvement by staging a quarrel with her, Khmel'nitskii discharged his duties as 'seksot' in the manner expected of him, clearly believing that Siniavskii was doing the same. Concurrently with the MGB operation to seduce and control Hélène Peltier, Khmel'nitskii was engaged in another to suborn his friends Kabo and Bregel' (on pain of death and with great reluctance, Khmel'nitskii maintains; with ingenuity and enthusiasm beyond the call of duty, according to his victims). Kabo and Bregel' were arrested in autumn 1949, on a charge of anti-Soviet activity, and sentenced to ten years in prison and camp solely on the strength of Khmel'nitskii's fabricated evidence.

When Kabo and Bregel' were released in 1954, their sentences having been commuted after the death of Stalin, they began to let it be known among their Moscow acquaintances who was responsible for their imprisonment. Word spread gradually, and remained at the level of rumour, denied by Khmel'nitskii himself, until April 1964, when he was to appear at the public defence of his doctoral (*kandidatskaia*) thesis. Here Bregel' and Kabo found a unique opportunity to speak out

[14] Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 136.
[15] Terts, *Spokoinoi nochi*, pp. 348–49.

publicly, as the rules regarding the defence of a dissertation stipulated that any person wishing to comment on the public profile of the candidate could do so. In an act unprecedented, as far as is known, in Soviet society, Bregel' came forward in his own name and that of Kabo to tell their story: that Khmel'nitskii had willingly and actively connived with the MGB, as its part-time agent, to fabricate a case against them. Khmel'nitskii was awarded the degree, but news of this unheard-of public denunciation spread rapidly through the capital and Khmel'nitskii was unable to give a convincing explanation when confronted by a group of friends.

Until this time, Khmel'nitskii had continued to associate with many of his old friends, including Siniavskii, who had long mistrusted him, and Daniel', who as late as 1963 seems to have disregarded the rumours and maintained a fairly close friendship, certainly close enough for the exchange of ideas for literary works. The slim body of work which formed the basis for Daniel''s conviction on charges of purveying anti-Soviet slander included the story 'Govorit Moskva', in which Radio Moscow announces a 'Public Murder Day'. This bizarre idea came to Daniel' not from his own imagination, but from that of Sergei Khmel'nitskii, as both parties stated at the trial.[16]

As for the events preceding the arrest of Daniel' and Siniavskii in 1965, the opposing camps present differing versions regarding Khmel'nitskii's involvement. Siniavskii has made his own suspicions clear: Khmel'nitskii's departure from the capital a short time before the arrest is taken as evidence of foreknowledge: 'Не потому ли за две недели до нашего с Даниэлем ареста он скрылся из Москвы? Отвалил, как говорится, в глубинку.'[17] Voronel' speaks of strong suspicions which later, he feels confident, were shown to be unfounded.[18] Khmel'nitskii maintains that he not only lacked any such foreknowledge, he also knew nothing of his friends' publishing venture, so could not have denounced them: 'я о секретных публикациях на Западе ничегошеньки не знал'.[19]

Although Khmel'nitskii had been among those to whom Siniavskii had read selected works, as was stated at the trial,[20] and although Khmel'nitskii, Siniavskii and Daniel' had associated with Hélène Peltier, it had not been revealed to Khmel'nitskii that his friends were sending their work abroad for publication with her help. Khmel'nitskii knew much about Daniel''s writing, and had introduced him to Hélène

[16] Aleksandr Ginzburg, *Belaia kniga po delu A. Siniavskogo i Iu. Danielia*, Frankfurt am Main, 1967 (hereafter *Belaia kniga*), pp. 176, 262.
[17] Terts, *Spokoinoi nochi*, p. 365.
[18] Aleksandr Voronel', 'Pravo byt' uslyshannym' (see note 2 above), pp. 147–49.
[19] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', p. 177.
[20] Ginzburg, *Belaia kniga*, p. 205.

Peltier,[21] but apparently did not learn that Daniel′ was 'Arzhak' until 1964. By disseminating this knowledge, however, even without actually communicating it directly to his KGB masters, he may well have hastened their arrest. The circumstances are described by Aleksandr Voronel′: at a gathering of friends, one member of the company reported hearing the story 'Govorit Moskva' on Radio Liberty and praised the genius of the author, 'Nikolai Arzhak'. Khmel′nitskii, recognizing the plot of the story, became agitated, and exclaimed for all to hear, 'That was Iul′ka [Daniel′]! I gave him the theme. Nobody else knew about it!'[22] Whether this outburst was a genuine expression of surprise, a way of claiming credit for his stolen idea, or a calculated ploy to spread the responsibility for the inevitable denunciation, the fact that Arzhak and Daniel′ were one and the same individual was soon common knowledge. His arrest, and that of his friend Siniavskii, was now only a matter of time. Khmel′nitskii was called as a witness at the trial, where he repeated that he had given Daniel′ the idea and indicated some regret at having disclosed his co-author's name: 'конечно, это была подлость — называть человека в связи с передачей антисоветских произведений антисоветскими радиостанциями'.[23]

By this time, the reports of Bregel′'s statement at Khmel′nitskii's public defence of his dissertation had become widespread in intellectual circles, and Khmel′nitskii had been condemned to ostracism by most of his former friends. At the Siniavskii and Daniel′ trial, the defendants regarded him as a hostile witness. Little more was heard of him for twenty years.

The publication of Siniavskii's novel *Spokoinoi nochi* in 1984 brought Khmel′nitskii to the fore once again and led to a furore in the *émigré* literary press. The last (and longest) chapter, 'Vo chreve kitovom', deals with the figure of Khmel′nitskii, his role in the case of Bregel′ and Kabo and the MGB plot to entrap Hélène Peltier. Khmel′nitskii is referred to by the initial S., though sometimes 'Serezha' is spelt out, and a tantalizing hint at an unnamed 'valiant namesake' (Bogdan Khmel′nitskii) identified him unmistakably to those with some inside knowledge, while revealing nothing to those lacking such knowledge.[24] The latter, however, were not left wondering for long, as 'Serezha' himself, by now resident in Berlin, lost no time in coming forward and speaking out in his own name 'from the belly of the whale'.

Several other prominent members of the intelligentsia became involved in the ensuing recriminations. Though few voices, if any, were

[21] Ibid., p. 179. It was Hélène Peltier who smuggled the works of Daniel′ and Siniavskii to France and arranged publication.
[22] Voronel′, 'Pravo byt′ uslyshannym', p. 146.
[23] Ginzburg, *Belaia kniga*, p. 262.
[24] Terts, *Spokoinoi nochi*, p. 347.

raised in support of Khmel'nitskii, this did not imply unanimous support for Siniavskii. Iulii Daniel', Larisa Bogoraz, Viktor Perel'man, Lev Kopelev and Efim Etkind, however, were among those who spoke out in support of Siniavskii.

Long before the publication of *Spokoinoi nochi*, Siniavskii, in exile in Paris, found himself the subject of widespread rumours that he was a KGB collaborator or worse, an agent. The rumours gained in intensity following Khmel'nitskii's public statements, causing Siniavskii great personal difficulties and leading to savage attacks in the *émigré* press, in particular from Vladimir Maksimov. The evidence of *Spokoinoi nochi* and Hélène's letter to Siniavskii on the subject were taken by some, including Maksimov, as further proof of Siniavskii's guilt.[25] He had, after all, admitted to having been recruited and to making a show of compliance, and the line between whole-hearted compliance and feigned compliance could not always be easily drawn.

Rumours of Siniavskii's continued collaboration were to persist even in the post-Soviet press of the early 1990s, and passions flared again when Maksimov reprinted Khmel'nitskii's 'Iz chreva kitova' with Voronel''s Introduction in *Kontinent* in 1992.[26] The rumours were scotched only with the discovery of certain KGB documents, including one bearing Andropov's signature, which made it clear that they originated within the KGB itself and were designed to drive a wedge between members of the dissident community while discrediting Siniavskii.[27] Khmel'nitskii's statements to the effect that Siniavskii's actions had been no different from his own now appeared to have been designed to contribute to this campaign, as some had supposed earlier. At this point, Maksimov apologized publicly to Siniavskii, citing one of the KGB operational directives from 1976 which spoke of a need to 'продолжить мероприятия по компрометации объекта и его жены перед окружением и оставшимися в Советском Союзе связями, как лиц, поддерживающие негласные отношения с КГБ'.[28] Siniavskii then called off the libel proceedings he had initiated against *Kontinent*.

Maksimov's apology, however, did not lay these charges to rest. Over three years later, on the day after Siniavskii's death, *Corriere della*

[25] 'Zakliuchaia razgovor' [editorial comment], *Kontinent*, 50, 1986, p. 381. An amended version of part of Hélène Zamoyska's letter immediately precedes these comments: pp. 380–81. The original, slightly shorter version appeared in *Vremia i my*, 91, 1986, pp. 222–23 and *Kontinent*, 49, 1986, pp. 338–39.

[26] *Kontinent*, 71, 1992, pp. 349–85. Six years earlier Siniavskii had written to Maksimov with regard to Khmel'nitskii's manuscript in an apparent move to pre-empt publication in *Kontinent*: see Siniavskii's letter and other documents, with editorial comment, 'O "ruke KGB" i prochem', *Kontinent*, 49, 1986, pp. 337–42. An angry rebuttal by Siniavskii and his wife of Maksimov's 1992 comments followed under 'Raznoe' in *Kontinent*, 73, 1992, p. 308.

[27] On the Andropov letter and the curious history of its publication in differing versions, see M. Rozanova, 'Abram da Mar'ia', *Sintaksis*, 34, 1994, pp. 125–50.

[28] 'Zaiavlenie dlia pechati', *Sintaksis*, 34, 1994, pp. 161–62.

Sera printed an interview with one of his long-standing adversaries, Irina Alberti, the editor of *Russkaia mysl'*, under the provocative headline, 'Era il grande avversario di Solženicyn; Confessò di aver collaborato con il KGB'. In a model of character assassination by innuendo, old wounds were liberally salted by tendentious statements: Siniavskii had been employed by the security organs to inform on foreign students (that is, Hélène Peltier was not alone); he did not serve his full seven-year sentence (so must have earned remission by collaboration); *Spokoinoi nochi* was his *mea culpa*, as he foresaw a premature death, having lost interest in life; and in the *perestroika* period 'divenne dichiaratamente comunista'.[29] The Alberti interview drew an indignant response in *Literaturnaia gazeta*. A group of prominent friends and supporters of Siniavskii rallied to his defence, much as they had thirty-one years earlier when he was before a Soviet court, and Alberti's statements were dismissed in much the same terms ('lozh'' and 'kleveta').[30] A brief item in *Izvestiia* a few days later was also strongly supportive of Siniavskii.[31]

If literature was 'on trial' at the show trial of Siniavskii and Daniel', it later became the forum for the post mortem, the medium in which the hidden background and the other protagonists emerged into the light and in which the evidence for and against the third member of the trio, Sergei Khmel'nitskii, was presented. It was fitting that literature should serve this purpose, given its traditional place in the life of the Russian intelligentsia and the heightened role of 'the word' under totalitarian Soviet rule. Siniavskii himself has stressed the power of the word when writers bury their works by night and customs officers seek them like contraband gold.[32] Andrzej Drawicz, in his study of Bulgakov, has written of the role of fiction in shaping the thought processes of Russian intellectuals, presenting a kind of 'higher reality' and providing behavioural models.[33] The blurring of genre boundaries is one feature of modern writing which is particularly marked in Siniavskii's work,

[29] *Corriere della Sera*, 26 February 1997. A more balanced view by Vittorio Strada shares the same general headline, 'Sinjavskij, il dissidente che tornò al comunismo', beside the Alberti interview on the same page.

[30] 'Otkroveniia "Zabytogo prizraka"', Pis'mo v redaktsiiu, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 12 March 1997. The signatories are L. Alekseeva, G. Belaia, L. Bogoraz, Iu. Burtin, Iu. Vishnevskaia, I. Golomshtok, A. Daniel', S. Kovalev, L. Kopelev, P. Litvinov, G. Nivat, M. Aucouturier and E. Etkind.

[31] Konstantin Kedrov, 'Andrei Siniavskii i posle smerti budorazhit umy', *Izvestiia*, 18 March 1997.

[32] Terts, 'Literaturnyi protsess v Rossii' (see note 9 above), pp. 145, 147.

[33] Andrzej Drawicz, *Mistrz i diabeł*, Cracow, 1990, p. 121.

and 'realizatsiia metafory' is an expression much used both in his critical writing and in discussion of his work.[34]

In Siniavskii's own literary *œuvre*, fiction cohabits comfortably with autobiography and with literary criticism. His works on Pushkin and Gogol' have been described as 'literature', though in the guise of literary criticism.[35] At the most basic level, Neil Cornwell's question — whether a work of fiction can at the same time be a work of literary criticism — is answered with a simple affirmative by the example of Siniavskii's satirical tale of compulsive writers, 'Grafomany'.[36] The narrator, Pavel Ivanovich Straustin (whose ambiguously suggestive initials are surely no accident), has many critical observations to make on matters of style, notably in the early novels of Konstantin Fedin, who, he believes, had plagiarized his (Straustin's) unpublished work. Literature is a prominent motif in the novel *Spokoinoi nochi* and a certain amount of literary commentary (highly favourable) is devoted to the poetry of Sergei Khmel'nitskii. The same may be said, though the commentary is less favourable, of Kabo's *Doroga v Avstraliiu*.

In the intertwining of genres which has been characteristic of the Siniavskii–Daniel' case and its long aftermath, the friend of their youth may be seen as author (poet), joint author (of a prose work), protagonist, disguised protagonist and literary critic (in the novel *Spokoinoi nochi* and in his response to it, 'Iz chreva kitova').

There was almost an uncanny prescience in the observation made by the Polish poet Aleksander Wat as early as 1961, on the basis of Siniavskii's then small body of writing, that those early works could provide material for some modern 'Notes from Underground'.[37] Siniavskii's later writing was to confirm that emergent trend. The belly of the whale came to stand for something very close to the spiritual Underground of Dostoevskii's seminal work. This nether world is explored not only by Siniavskii: it is shown in different aspects and via

[34] Some related observations concerning modern autobiography and the relation between autobiography and fiction have been made by the Polish writer Tadeusz Konwicki, with reference to his own work: ABC Radio, 'Books and Writing', 12 August 1996. See Donald Fanger, 'A Change of Venue: Russian Journals of the Emigration', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 November 1986, for a survey of the Siniavskii–Khmel'nitskii case as it then appeared and for some comment on the complex relationship between fiction and reality.

[35] G. Pomerants, 'Urok medlennogo chteniia', *Oktiabr'*, 1993, 6, p. 179.

[36] Neil Cornwell, 'At the Circus with Olesha and Siniavskii', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 71, 1993, 1, pp. 1–13 (p. 13). Cornwell's question, of course, seeks to probe deeper levels of literary polemics than this. 'Grafomany' may be found in Abram Terts, *Fantasticheskii mir Abrama Tertsa*, New York, 1966.

[37] Stefan Bergholz (pseudonym of Aleksander Wat), 'Czytając Terca', Foreword to Abram Terc, *Opowieści fantastyczne*, Paris, 1961, p. 14.

different genres in the works considered here, united by the central figure of Sergei Khmel'nitskii.[38]

Daniel': 'Govorit Moskva'

This was chronologically the first work to bring Khmel'nitskii to public notice in any way, although the reader who lacks the background knowledge cannot be aware of Khmel'nitskii's role. In this case Khmel'nitskii is in no sense the theme but the provider of the central idea. The story is thus a useful indicator of the imaginative powers of the mind behind it, and perhaps of Khmel'nitskii's real attitude to the regime he so loyally served. Daniel' spoke at the trial of the origins of this story in 1960–61, at a time when there were real fears that Stalinist-style dictatorship might be reimposed under Khrushchev and all its more bizarre manifestations might again come to be the accepted norm. In that world a 'public murder day' could be made to seem scarcely more aberrant than many established Soviet traditions, while officially sanctioned murder by members of the public over a period of one day might produce modest results compared to judicial and arbitrary killing by the regime over a much longer period, as Varlaam Shalamov pointed out.[39]

It will not escape notice that the genesis of this story and its dual authorship (as described above) bear a close resemblance to the plot of the aforementioned 'Grafomany', which in a sense foretold shortly forthcoming events as accurately as 'Sud idet'.[40] Khmel'nitskii, like Straustin, would soon declare for all to hear that he was part-author of a story which had made another writer famous, and twenty years later would proclaim that the anonymous 'S.' of *Spokoinoi nochi*, the brilliant poet, critic and unprincipled informer, was none other than Sergei Khmel'nitskii. In both cases we see the same pride of authorship, indignation at misattribution, and fear of anonymity that characterizes Siniavskii's 'graphomaniacs'. While Straustin's works do not lead to any writer being put on trial, his writings are (he believes) smuggled to France, where they receive wider (still anonymous) circulation, like 'Grafomany' itself, and 'Govorit Moskva'.

[38] Efim Etkind's comparison between Khmel'nitskii and Dostoevskii's Underground Man is based less on Siniavskii's account than on Khmel'nitskii's response to it: Etkind, 'Ispoved' shenapana', *Vremia i my*, 91, 1986, pp. 230–36.

[39] V. Shalamov, 'Pis'mo staromu drugu' in E. M. Velikanova (ed.), *Tsena metafory, ili Prestuplenie i nakazanie Siniavskogo i Danielia*, Moscow, 1989 (hereafter *Tsena metafory*), p. 501. This letter had earlier appeared in Ginzburg, *Belaia kniga*, but without the name of the author.

[40] For the text of 'Sud idet' see *Fantasticheskii mir Abrama Tertsa*, pp. 197–276. The phrase 'vo chreve kitovom' was first used by Siniavskii in 'Grafomany', where it is the title of a collection of verse by S. Galkin: p. 92.

It is not possible to separate the contributions of the twin authors of 'Govorit Moskva' or to establish how far Khmel'nitskii elaborated the idea before presenting it to Daniel'. Khmel'nitskii never claimed, however, to have done more than to offer Daniel' the raw material, the idea of the 'Day' itself, so it seems likely that the all-important reaction to the Day by the narrator and individuals in his circle of friends, as well as the summing up of results in the various Soviet republics, is the work of Daniel' rather than Khmel'nitskii. There can be little conclusive evidence of this, however, beyond the consistency of the narrator's moral stance with that in 'Iskuplenie'.[41]

Kartsev, like Viktor Vol'skii of 'Iskuplenie', clearly rejects the ideology of the Soviet state, refusing to be tempted into the murder of his rival in love, and takes a stand against the Communist morality which demands that the citizen bind himself to it by acting against his innate moral scruples. Daniel' defended his story at his trial by maintaining that, in essence, his hero was stating the primacy of his conscience, which would not permit him to kill, a line of defence supported by Lev Kopelev.[42] The heroes of both stories adopt a stance of determined passive resistance (at least) and non-co-operation. The result may, as Boris Shragin suggests, have been a view of good and evil which at the time struck Daniel''s readers, accustomed to finer gradations in their complex times, as a little too categorical. Daniel' was passed over by many readers, in Shragin's view, as one who offended 'ustoiavshiesia esteticheskie prilichiia'.[43] Whatever the critical reaction, it is curious that the inspiration for both stories should have come from one who did not share the protagonists' views, saw no place for personal atonement and in fact served those whose task it was to combat such independent thinking.

Daniel': 'Iskuplenie'

It was Gustaw Herling-Grudziński who drew attention to the fact that the republication of Sologub's tale of the archetypal informer Peredonov, *Melkii bes*, at the height of the first 'thaw', in 1957, could hardly have been more topical.[44] This is exactly the period in which 'Iskuplenie' is set, as stated in its opening sentence: 'It was the time

[41] Boris Shragin, 'Iskuplenie Iuliia Danielia', *Sintaksis*, 16, 1986, p. 32. Shragin notes that Daniel''s heroes, unlike Siniavskii's, are his 'doubles', that is, they express a view close to his own.

[42] Ginzburg, *Belaia kniga*, p. 183. Lev Kopelev, 'K sudu nad literatorami' in Kopelev, *Vera v slovo: vystupleniia i pis'ma 1962–1976 gg.*, Ann Arbor, MI, 1977, pp. 22–25 (p. 23).

[43] Shragin, 'Iskuplenie Iuliia Danielia', p. 25. Iu. Mal'tsev also finds a weakness in Daniel''s over-simplification of complex moral issues: Mal'tsev, *Vol'naia russkaia literatura*, Frankfurt am Main, 1976, pp. 75–81.

[44] Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, 'Piekło donosu' in his *Upiory rewolucji*, Paris, 1969, pp. 54–58.

when songs from the camps were becoming popular.' This was a time when many apparently honourable reputations were at risk, as Daniel' pointed out at his trial. It was also the time when Khmel'nitskii was having to confront his victims and do his best to counter the spreading rumours.

In 'Iskuplenie', a thematic relative of Khmel'nitskii appears as a character, and the theme of betrayal and guilt is treated via the (disguised) figure of Khmel'nitskii. The story, which dates from 1963, three years after 'Govorit Moskva', is in Boris Shragin's view a much more mature work.[45] While Daniel''s plot departs from the biographical facts, this story bears a close resemblance to the watershed in the life of Khmel'nitskii, although there is no suggestion that Khmel'nitskii himself expounded it to Daniel' as the basis of a story (as was the case with 'Govorit Moskva'). In the early post-Stalin years, the hero and first-person narrator Viktor Vol'skii finds himself ostracized by his former friends after a prisoner, Feliks Chernov, returns from a labour camp and accuses him of responsibility for sending him there.

Khmel'nitskii would certainly have recognized his own predicament on reading the conversation between Feliks Chernov and Vol'skii: 'вы не только марионетка сталинских времен'; 'в вас негодяйское, черное начало. Будь я верующим, я бы сказал: антихристово начало'; 'лучше всего вам было бы уехать куда-нибудь на край света, на Дальний Восток или в Среднюю Азию'.[46] Khmel'nitskii himself was already being spoken of in terms similar to these, and the notion of the Antichrist was one which Siniavskii and Kabo would find appropriate in their later writings.[47] A little later Khmel'nitskii too would 'disappear' (as Vol'skii was advised to do) to Central Asia.

Daniel''s story derives its poignancy from the fact that in this case the accusation is misdirected: conclusive though the evidence appears, the hero did not denounce his friend, but nobody will believe in his innocence. Bogoraz has noted that this story is devoted not to Khmel'nitskii himself, but to one of four versions which he gave, at one time or another, of the events surrounding Kabo and Bregel' — in this case maintaining that he was being falsely accused of denouncing them.[48] Vol'skii has no means of proving his innocence. Khmel'nitskii, being guilty, has no means either. The narrator is sympathetic to Vol'skii's plight, and in a conversation with an anonymous figure of authority it transpires that the informer was not Vol'skii but another

[45] Shragin, 'Iskuplenie Iuliia Danielia', p. 21.
[46] Arzhak, *Povesti i rasskazy* (see note 5 above), p. 119.
[47] Over twenty years later, Daniel' himself wrote of Khmel'nitskii's 'dukhovnoe urodstvo, nichem ne ob"iasnimaia tiaga ko zlu': Daniel', 'Eksgumatsiia predatelia' (see note 5 above), p. 206.
[48] Larisa Bogoraz, 'Dushevnye muki seksota', *Vremia i my*, 93, 1986, p. 211.

man who was involved in the case and has since committed suicide. Nevertheless, the narrator is powerless to assist the hero. The story might be read as implying that Khmel'nitskii is also innocent of the charges and deserving of understanding, but this would involve an excessively literal linking of the hero and the prototype, whose story is very different.

Many years later, Daniel' told how he had heard the rumours of his friend's treachery at an early date ('ia vsegda znal'), but had been unwilling to give them full credence.[49] Perhaps the twist he gave to his plot in 1963 reflects this lingering uncertainty. By the time of his own trial his remaining doubts had been dispelled, as Khmel'nitskii had been exposed by his victims in April 1964 and was forced to admit his past activities. Daniel' spoke of him in 1966 as his 'former friend'.[50]

None the less, the Khmel'nitskii story provided Daniel' with a convenient platform from which to approach the themes of personal relations, guilt and responsibility under a totalitarian regime. In his further development of the plot he departs more radically from the facts as he had heard them. Vol'skii, though entirely guiltless, feels it his moral duty to assume the role of scapegoat and take upon himself the burden of guilt for the offence with which he is charged (and, more broadly and symbolically, for all others of a similar nature and for the passivity of the liberal intelligentsia). His act of atonement is needed as part of the healing process which society must undergo, whatever the consequences for the individual. The strain combined with the isolation drives him to insanity. Sergei Khmel'nitskii, in the accounts of Kabo and Bregel', did not apologize for denouncing them, although some regret is expressed in his 'Iz chreva kitova'.[51] Unlike Vol'skii in 'Iskuplenie', however, he shows little sign of heartfelt repentance, and his earlier private confession to Siniavskii in 1949 ('На мне уже два трупа висят. [. . .] Я — убийца') was made, Siniavskii felt, more in a spirit of daredevilry than regret.[52] He felt that his subsequent ostracism was undeserved and showed no inclination to assume responsibility for anybody else's misdeeds. In Daniel''s hands, however, the unrepentant prototype becomes a figure who serves as a symbolic focus for the catharsis that post-Stalin society so badly needs.

A prominent feature of these two stories (not evident in 'Ruki' or 'Chelovek iz MINAPa', in which Khmel'nitskii has no role) is the extensive use of quoted poetry and song, sometimes cited *in extenso*, sometimes in brief fragments, some by known poets such as Sofronov, sometimes attributed to poets who are almost certainly part of the

[49] Daniel', 'Eksgumatsiia predatelia', p. 207.
[50] Ginzburg, *Belaia kniga*, p. 176.
[51] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', pp. 168–69.
[52] Terts, *Spokoinoi nochi*, p. 383.

fiction. Here too, as will shortly be seen, the reader may find links to the figure of Sergei Khmel'nitskii.

Khmel'nitskii: Poems

Literature generally and poetry in particular occupy a vitally important place in the non-fictional Khmel'nitskii story, providing the medium and the environment in which the protagonists move. It was a shared love of art and poetry that brought Siniavskii and Khmel'nitskii together as boys, and Kabo and Khmel'nitskii found much in common here as adolescents and later, in their post-war association. Khmel'nitskii's knowledge of and love for the poetry of Bagritskii, Gumilev, Sel'vinskii and others is given much emphasis by Siniavskii and Kabo. In addition to possessing a connoisseur's appreciation of poetry, Khmel'nitskii is a gifted poet in his own right, having produced verse of extraordinary subtlety and maturity from the age of eleven.[53] Siniavskii and Kabo remember and quote his poetry decades after first hearing it, admiring the precocious genius, while able to comment on its meaning in context.

When Khmel'nitskii published his rejoinder to Siniavskii in 1986, he included with it the text of some of the poems Siniavskii had quoted and several more, nine in all.[54] It seems that these verses had not appeared in print until Siniavskii quoted fragments of them. As in the case of 'Govorit Moskva', there again seemed to be more than a touch of proprietorial pride of authorship here, with a wish to set the record straight, including an alleged misquotation.[55]

The nine poems are clearly not the sum total of Khmel'nitskii's output, as further fragments not included here are quoted by Siniavskii and Kabo. They span a long period, at least from May 1945 until June 1965, and possibly longer (some of the poems are undated and it seems that strict chronological order has not been observed). Like the story 'Govorit Moskva', several of them afford an insight into the creative mind at the heart of this complex story and may help towards an understanding of how the poet perceives himself. The self-portrait provided in verse, however, is significantly different from that given in prose in the preceding article 'Iz chreva kitova'.

'Kogda raspinali Khrista' stands out in two respects.[56] First, it is the only poem to allude in any way to the poet's Jewish origins. These do not figure prominently in this story, although 'Iz chreva kitova' does contain suggestions that Siniavskii's unsympathetic portrayal of him

[53] See ibid., pp. 342–44.
[54] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', pp. 180–87.
[55] Ibid., p. 151. Khmel'nitskii says that Siniavskii's quotations from his poetry are deliberately distorted — 'perevrannye' — but points out only one misquotation.
[56] Ibid., pp. 184–85.

owes something to his former friend's alleged anti-Semitic feelings.[57] Secondly, the poem raises a theme related to one of Bulgakov's in *Master i Margarita*, still unpublished and unknown in the 1940s: the crucifixion of Christ, 'made strange' by a detached observer, in this case the poet's ancestor, who 'praises the executioner in very bad Latin'. If 'betrayal' would be too strong a word (the hero of the poem was not a disciple or friend), there are nevertheless echoes here of the theme of Pontius Pilate and his enduring sense of guilt, which is so important in Bulgakov's scheme.[58] The poem concludes:

Господь, распятый за ны,
Кого я молю так редко!
Сними с меня часть вины
За чистую душу предка.

The last couplet contains a somewhat paradoxical plea of a kind seen elsewhere, when Khmel'nitskii writes not of his ancestor but of himself. Here the ancestor is at once innocent (*chistaia dusha*) and aware of his own moral failings. Moreover, his sins are not of the venial kind, but will endure for many generations if the poet can still bear his forebear's guilt. Having observed the crucifixion from the cover of a thicket and joined with the crowd in hailing the executioner, the ancestor then falls asleep 'suffering terribly' (*uzhasno perezhivaia*). This phrase seems a somewhat hyperbolic description of his mental state, as nothing in his behaviour confirms a deeply felt sense of wrongdoing. The poem as a whole may be read as an allegorical account of an act of betrayal in 1949, following which the poet himself visited his victims' families, feigning innocence and concern, to observe the effect of his actions.

The atmosphere of the same period is the temporal setting for 'Neizvestno kuda ty idesh' po stolitse tvoei . . .', describing a stroll in Moscow on a winter's night.[59] The poet's wanderings end at the dead of night in a deserted Red Square:

Ты дошел до конца. Оглянись на неверном снегу.
Тяжек хлопьев полет на бетонные струны трибун.
Часовые стоят, и глядит немигающий ГУМ
На стоящих, и спящих, и прахом лежащих в гробу.

This stanza is quoted by Siniavskii, who admires its formal qualities and brings to bear his background knowledge in his reflections on the

[57] Ibid., p. 155. Anti-Semitism does not figure in Khmel'nitskii's relations with Daniel', Kabo or Bregel', presumably because these three, unlike Siniavskii, are also of Jewish descent. For commentary on Russian–Jewish relations in Siniavskii's writing, see R. Lourie, *Letters to the Future: An Approach to Sinyavsky-Tertz*, Ithaca, NY, 1975, pp. 134–36.

[58] See Margaret Ziolkowski, 'Pilate and Pilatism in Recent Russian Literature' in Sheelagh Duffin Graham (ed.), *New Directions in Soviet Literature*, Basingstoke, 1992, pp. 164–81. Ziolkowski notes the presence of this theme in, *inter alia*, Siniavskii's *Sud idet* and Daniel''s 'Govorit Moskva'.

[59] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', p. 183.

possible meaning contained in the phrase 'ty doshel do kontsa', which he remembers in slightly different form: 'ty doshel do cherty'. He takes this to be the line beyond which conscience ceases to operate and the poet enters the Dostoevskian (or Nietzschean) world 'beyond good and evil', having 'stepped over' that line (*perestupivshego chertu*) by betraying his two friends.[60] Khmel'nitskii protests in his rejoinder that the line originally ran 'do kontsa', thus denying that contemplation of any such metaphysical question is implied.[61]

One may wonder, however, whether the meaning of this set phrase is radically altered by the use of the slightly unexpected 'konets'. In either case, the narrative persona seems to come to the graves of the heroes of the revolution as if seeking reassurance or justification for his otherwise unforgivable acts in the name of that revolution.

The 'romance' of the NKVD agent abroad, the 'lone wolf', 'the cat that walks by himself' (a figure with whom Khmel'nitskii felt an affinity) is the theme of a poem not included in this collection. Kabo quotes a single couplet: 'жена не узнает, друзья не придут,/правительство не защитит'.[62]

Khmel'nitskii's love of art is clear in a poem not reproduced in this selection but quoted by Siniavskii:

> Клод Монэ и Дегас,
> Вы живете во мне не старея [. . .]
> Таитянин Гоген
> И Безумец, отрезавший ухо [. . .]

This, Siniavskii stresses, is the work of a schoolboy poet aged eleven or twelve.[63]

The poem presented first, 'A. Siniavskomu', is not quoted in *Spokoinoi nochi*, although it has the clearest and closest personal connection to Siniavskii. This is presumably the reason why it is given pride of place in this selection. According to Kabo, it dates from the 1940s, before Siniavskii abandoned poetry for prose.[64] It begins with a meditation on the violent deaths which have been the lot of so many of Russia's best poets and leads to a graphic — some might say ghoulish — prognosis of suicide by shooting for Siniavskii himself. The wit and light touch of the phrasing stand in stark contrast to the grim conclusion, from which, moreover, any hint of an after-life of any kind is absent. Instead the end of life is marked by a 'chernyi klozet', even less inviting than the black sack into which Tolstoi's Ivan Il'ich eventually falls.

[60] Terts, *Spokoinoi nochi*, pp. 346–49.
[61] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', p. 173.
[62] Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 151.
[63] Terts, *Spokoinoi nochi*, p. 344.
[64] Kabo, personal communication.

Хорошо перед сном запереться тихонько в уборной,
Сунуть дуло за зубы, прочесть — «уходя, гаси свет»,
Крикнуть: общий привет! — И упасть вверх тормашками в черный,
всем на свете назначенный рано иль поздно клозет.

Будет вечер как вечер, в зелено-оранжевой краске,
Но раскроется дверь, загудев как пожарный набат,
Управдом завопит: удавились профессор Синявский? —
И помчит, накренившись, крутить телефон-автомат.

The light musicality of the elegant anapaestic pentameter is set against a harsh background and cold, functional details, each sinister in its own way: a gun muzzle, a telephone and a sign with a mocking injunction to switch off the light.[65] This dark prediction, originally written when the poet and his subject were close friends, seems the more sinister when resurrected forty years later in the context of relations long soured. Whatever the psychological motivation here, a more sinister epitaph to a poisoned friendship would be difficult to find.[66]

In 'Primerno god tomu nazad/menia ubil upavshii svod', placed last in the selection and dated 29 June 1965, Khmel'nitskii refers to his public exposure on 9 April 1964.[67] He dated his downfall, his exclusion from the intellectual society in which he had always lived and breathed, from this event, although the rumours about his past had certainly been a cause of embarrassment since the mid-1950s. Taken with the account he gives of himself in the foregoing article, it is his clearest statement of the far-reaching effects which this exposure had upon him, how his life was broken by it and the subsequent expulsion from the society he so valued. With succinct eloquence he absolves his accusers of blame (in the first place, Kabo and Bregel', but possibly including the wider circle who called him to account shortly after the defence of his dissertation), while making no more than an oblique reference to his own misdeed of 1949 which lies at the root of his current misfortune: 'kak neobratimo zlo'.

In this omission there is something of the same paradox concerning guilt and punishment which characterized 'Kogda raspinali Khrista . . .'. The poet displays no clear awareness of his own wrongdoing when he pleads for forgiveness for his accusers, suggesting instead that they themselves have been accused of doing him wrong: 'На вас, ребята, нет вины./Ей-Богу, нет./Кто вам сказал?', and, further on, 'Прости вам Бог

[65] This particular verse form is relatively uncommon in Russian poetry. A later example which uses exactly the same prosodic form and rhyme scheme for quite different purposes is Bulat Okudzhava's lyrical 'Gruzinskaia pesnia', which, by contrast, expresses a kind of religious feeling: see Marran, 'Bulat Okudzhava i ego vremia', *Kontinent*, 36, 1983, pp. 329–54 (pp. 340–41).

[66] The prediction proved wrong, of course. The cause of Siniavskii's death on 25 February 1997 was cancer.

[67] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', p. 187.

упавший свод'. His predicament is felt as a cruel blow of fate, unconnected to his past misdeeds. He has simply been unlucky: 'Ужасно мне не повезло/Примерно год/Тому назад'.

A poem which made a deep impression on Kabo and was particularly dear to its author's heart is 'Zdravstvui milyi neraskaiannyi zlodei . . .', in which the poet ruminates on his own evil nature and voices his pleasure at having discovered a kindred spirit.[68] This other 'zlodei' is not identified. Kabo, who well remembers the author at that period, offers two possibilities: his first suggestion (in the published text of *Doroga v Avstraliiu*) is that the poem might be addressed to the spider which lived in Khmel'nitskii's lavatory and of which he spoke with particular affection. Spiders and cobwebs, of course, provide rich material for evil associations, as well as links to Dostoevskii's great sinners, as Siniavskii, Kabo and others have pointed out,[69] and the motif of the spider is prominent in Siniavskii's account. Not even Svidrigailov, however, could have described himself in quite the terms chosen by Khmel'nitskii in this poem:

Но пройдем мы по земле и по воде,
Наглым смехом нарушая их покой,
Потому что я люблю плохих людей,
Потому что я и сам такой плохой.

In his revised text for English translation, however, Kabo draws attention to the date appended to the poem when it was published in *Dvadtsat' dva*: 7 May 1945, Khmel'nitskii's birthday.[70] This suggests that it is the poet's birthday address to himself with all his endearing faults. The use of the epithet 'neraskaiannyi' suggests that the poet's career in villainy was already established before his twentieth birthday. Kabo makes the point, however, that Khmel'nitskii was striking an attitude here rather than expressing a deeply held view of himself.[71]

This date, 7 May 1945, has other associations. Some ironic significance might possibly be found in the fact that at the moment when the Stalinist state was glorying in its greatest international triumph, able for once to present itself as a force for good in the world, and while Kabo and Bregel' were at the front helping to secure that triumph, their friend, far from the front, was absorbed in introspective musings on his own nature and a taste for mischief-making which served to buttress the regime at home.

[68] Ibid., p. 182. A stanza is quoted in Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 150.
[69] Ibid. The link with Stavrogin and Petr Verkhovenskii, so strongly suggested in *Spokoinoi nochi*, is noted by Matich, 'Spokojnoj noči', p. 56.
[70] Kabo, *The Road to Australia*, [unpublished English text].
[71] Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 151.

A self-image as a roguish clown emerges clearly in these lines, as in some of the other poems in which the author appears to map out a pleasurable mode of life for himself:

Рассыпать стрелы направлений,
Запутать ниточки погонь,
Перешмыгнуть мышиной тенью
Навстречу пущенный огонь,

И от бильярдного удара
Пробив, не глядя, пелену,
Пойти упругой костью шара
Вкось по зеленому сукну.

This appears to be an early programmatic statement, in which the characteristic concepts are disguise, concealment, trickery and evasion, none of which can be said to be prominent in the innocent and much-deceived Khmel'nitskii as he describes himself in 'Iz chreva kitova'. There is also a pride in a sense of grand isolation, which is not felt as cause for unhappiness:

Все прекрасно, только очень может быть —
Никогда я никого не полюблю
И меня, пожалуй, не за что любить.
(From 'Zdravstvui, milyi . . .')

The splendid isolation of the poet, aloof from the crowd about him, is of course a well-known theme, but here it acquires an added dimension — the poet as informer — and Daniel''s 'Iskuplenie', written many years later, is brought vividly to mind. There is a marked similarity in theme, manner and even phrasing between Khmel'nitskii's poem and the three stanzas by 'Il'ia Chur' beginning 'Ia sogliadatai mezhdu vami . . .', which serve as that story's epigraph and includes the lines

О, милые, и я такой же,
Интеллигентен и тактичен,
Но вот — рванет мороз по коже
И на полях наставит птичек.

И я предам вас, я предам вас!
За что? За то, что в час вечерний
Случайно вспомню я про давность
Вражды художника и черни.[72]

[72] Daniel', *Govorit Moskva*, p. 97. I follow Margaret Dalton in placing the poet's name in quotation marks: Margaret Dalton, *Andrei Siniavskii and Julii Daniel': Two Soviet 'Heretical' Writers*, Wurzburg, 1973, pp. 153, 168; Dalton has no doubt that the poet is in fact Daniel': see p. 153. The English translation includes the poem but without the name of the supposed author (thus suggesting that the poet and the author of the story are one and the same individual): see *This is Moscow Speaking* (see note 5 above), p. 76.

Chur's 'Ia takoi zhe' sounds a clear echo of Khmel'nitskii's 'ia i sam takoi plokhoi' and reminds us that the distance between executioner and victim need not be great.[73] The theme of the spy in the ranks of the intelligentsia, ever watchful and ready to betray his friends at any moment, may well have been inspired by the figure of Khmel'nitskii, like the theme of the unmasked informer in the body of the story. This poet's name, 'Chur' ('keep away!'), points clearly to the hero of the story, who is fated to be shunned, like Khmel'nitskii, once he is exposed. It would be interesting to know whether Daniel', like Kabo, had previously heard Khmel'nitskii's 'Zdravstvui milyi . . .'.

Kabo: 'Doroga v Avstraliiu'

Unlike in Siniavskii's work, here there is no mask of fiction, rather an attempt to reconstruct as fully and accurately as possible the facts of the author's life, including the friendship which would have such far-reaching effects. Chronologically it is the latest (1995), but it reaches far back, indeed into the childhood of the author and his friendship, dating from over half a century ago, with the youth who would later ensure him a ten-year sentence in prison and camp.

This story (principally chapter seven, 'Geroi nashego vremeni') supports much of what Siniavskii has written and adds substantially to the detail. He tells of Khmel'nitskii's architect father, who died when Khmel'nitskii was still young, and of the uncle who held an important post in Dal'stroi, the administration of the Kolyma camp complex.[74] Kabo believes that Khmel'nitskii's collaboration with the 'organs' began much earlier than other sources suggest, probably as the price for being spared army service in 1943–45. Kabo makes an important contribution to the collective portrait thanks to the telling details which lodged in his memory: the Judas kiss, so clearly symbolic of betrayal; the attempted planting of evidence in the form of American magazines (Kabo refused to keep them); the borrowing and copying of Kabo's early literary efforts (as in the Siniavskii–Daniel' trial, literature was to serve as criminal evidence); the 'literary circle', which Khmel'nitskii urged Kabo to set up (Kabo refused). All of these support the epithet 'poet-provokator', that is, of an informer who did more than merely inform — he actively instigated the production of incriminating

[73] On this point see also Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 127.
[74] Ibid., pp. 136–37.

material.[75] (The history of the genesis of Daniel''s 'Govorit Moskva' also shows that 'provocateur' is hardly too strong a term.)

Something of the extent of Khmel'nitskii's activities on behalf of the MGB emerges in a revealing episode concerning a member of the British Embassy staff, referred to as 'Mister Kelly'. After an initial meeeting, apparently by chance, at the Old Believers' church at Rogozhskaia zastava, a further meeting was arranged, with all three present, at Khmel'nitskii's grandmother's flat. In Kabo's account, Khmel'nitskii was not only heedless of the risks of meeting Western diplomats, but guided the conversation towards sensitive topics. In prison, months later, reviewing the course of events, Kabo concluded that the British diplomat was an MGB agent masquerading as a foreigner and assuming a foreign accent with the express purpose of entrapping him.[76] This remained his firm belief when he published his memoirs in 1995.

It has since transpired, however, that on this point, at least, there was no deception: while it seems unlikely that Khmel'nitskii was motivated by altruistic notions of the international brotherhood of man, the diplomat, Mr Peter Kelly, was in fact genuine and remembers these encounters well. On several points his recollections tally with those of Kabo. In both accounts Khmel'nitskii was fearless in his provocative recitations of anti-Soviet verses in public places. In Kelly's memory of events, Khmel'nitskii can be seen developing and exploiting disparate contacts in exactly the manner described by Kabo.[77]

This friendship also made it possible for Khmel'nitskii to name Kelly as the source of the copies of *Life Magazine* which he urged Kabo to keep at home, although Khmel'nitskii's source was almost certainly the MGB collection.

The potential uses of a friendship such as this in the climate of 1949 appear to be threefold: first, to compromise Vladimir Kabo; secondly, to compromise Peter Kelly, or indeed 'expose' his embassy, if he could be shown to take an interest in anti-Soviet subversion; and, thirdly, to manufacture evidence of an anti-Soviet conspiracy with Western links, for use in the developing anti-Semitic campaign. For different reasons, however, these aims were not pressed to their conclusion. In Kabo's

[75] The theme of the informer and his *modus operandi* emerges vividly in brief passages in a novel published in the same year as Kabo's memoirs but written much earlier (1962): see I. Grekova, *Svezho predanie*, New York, 1995, chapter four, especially p. 170. In the late 1940s, Iura Nesterov is instructed by an MGB lieutenant-colonel to provide information and to extract it by being outspoken in conversations with his friends. Nesterov refuses and is arrested. Kabo himself tells how he was detailed by an army security officer to report conversations among his fellow conscripts. He avoided doing so and was not subjected to further pressure: Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 78.

[76] Ibid., pp. 143 ff.

[77] Peter Kelly, personal communication.

interrogation his acquaintance with the British diplomat was not used against him. As for the other two aims, it is known that at a separate meeting, at the Moscow zoo, Khmel'nitskii and an unidentified friend suggested that Kelly might act as a conduit to the West for information about an anti-Soviet Jewish organization. Kelly refused.[78] Had he shown willingness, he would have provided the Soviet authorities with valuable ammunition for use in the anti-Semitic campaign then gathering momentum.

Like Siniavskii, Kabo is acutely conscious of the parallels in earlier literature and of Khmel'nitskii as a literary construct, almost a product of their collective reading. He gives special emphasis to echoes of Lermontov, whose interest in demonism is well known. The chapter heading 'Geroi nashego vremeni' contains the same irony about the 'hero' and the same comment on the 'times', a period in which, in Kabo's description, any sense of morality lay deeply buried.[79] This hero, like Pechorin, cannot help destroying the lives of his friends. Just as Pechorin is driven by an inner compulsion to create excitement for himself in order to stave off boredom, Khmel'nitskii thrives on intrigue, bending others to his will in order to betray them. Pechorin's taste for eavesdropping is replicated here in a professional eavesdropper who can go one step further, by provoking conversations and situations which will later be exploited in ways which Pechorin could not have imagined.

Soviet critics upheld a view of Pechorin as an essentially virtuous and gifted individual perverted by the times in which he lived. A hundred years later, Khmel'nitskii, in all portraits but most visibly in that by Kabo, is actively encouraged to follow his natural inclinations and participate in similar intrigues (not seen by the dominant culture as perversions). He himself, in self-justification, would claim that he was forced to do so.

Kabo's portrait, like Siniavskii's, sometimes shows a figure strongly reminiscent of Dostoevskii's characters. Khmel'nitskii feels a need to raise dangerous matters in conversation, referring provocatively to police spies and coming close to exposing his real role before retracting into joking mode. The same urge to shock and experience the thrill of near-exposure is displayed by Raskol'nikov in his teasing conversation with Zametov: 'А что, если это я старуху и Лизавету убил?' Khmel'nitskii's behaviour perfectly matches Dostoevskii's phrase, 'vysovyvat' iazyk'.

[78] Ibid.

[79] This feature of the period also impressed Hélène Peltier during her studies at Moscow University: see her letter to Siniavskii in *Vremia i my*, 91, 1986, p. 223.

There is an appropriately surrealistic episode showing Khmel'nitskii in clearly demonic terms; the grotesque intrudes into an otherwise soberly realistic narrative in the form of Kabo's nightmare in Lefortovo Prison. In it his friend appears in an entirely new light: 'отвратительная, зловещая харя, толстые губы чудовищно вытянуты, изо рта свисал подобный змеиному жалу язык'.[80] It is this dream that makes clear to Kabo his friend's true nature, hitherto not fully understood. Independently of Herling-Grudziński, he compares his friend with Sologub's 'petty demon' and no longer has any doubt that he is 'sluga i shpion d'iavola'.[81]

Khmel'nitskii, not unnaturally, protested with some sarcasm on finding himself depicted in a demonic role in *Spokoinoi nochi*,[82] claiming that Siniavskii had exaggerated grossly and that he was really little different from anybody else, in particular from those who would accuse him. Others had written earlier of the complicity between victim and perpetrator, the need for scapegoats and the short distance separating victim and perpetrator in Daniel''s stories.[83] All of this came forcefully to mind when Khmel'nitskii raised his voice against his detractors, stressing that Siniavskii and he were equally involved in the same conspiracy. 'Iz chreva kitova' insinuates repeatedly that Siniavskii remained an agent of the KGB even after his imprisonment and exile. Being, in Khmel'nitskii's word, 'souchastniki', neither could claim any moral superiority over the other. Voronel', in his Foreword to 'Iz chreva kitova', argued for a less categorical approach to moral issues generated in the tense atmosphere of Soviet society.

The hard-line position long held by Maksimov made no allowances or exceptions and found Siniavskii as culpable as Khmel'nitskii. Whatever the circumstances and however long his prison term, Siniavskii had compromised himself by his compliance. Voronel' did not question Siniavskii's record, but in arguing Khmel'nitskii's right to a hearing he also seemed to tend towards a diminishing moral distance, while stating that by 1986 Khmel'nitskii had suffered enough punishment and a pardon might now be considered.

The majority of those who responded to Siniavskii's novel and Khmel'nitskii's 'Iz chreva kitova' did not accept the notion of 'moral equivalence', and even Maksimov eventually felt compelled to change his mind. As Hélène Peltier and Efim Etkind pointed out, Siniavskii

[80] Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 153.
[81] Ibid., p. 156.
[82] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', p. 152.
[83] See, for example, Max Hayward, Foreword to *This is Moscow Speaking*; see also Iu. Mal'tsev, *Vol'naia russkaia literatura*, pp. 79–81. Kabo later took up the theme again: Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 127.

had committed no betrayal.[84] Instead he had extricated himself from the web of collaboration and been punished by KGB-inspired rumours actively endorsed by his former friend. Few were disposed to forgive Khmel'nitskii his transgressions of four decades earlier. To date, the literary products of this case have not been forgiving either, and supporters of 'lustration' in ex-Communist countries would find little in the Khmel'nitskii story to make them change their position. His own poetry, with Kabo's portrait of him, do little to divest him of the symbolic aura lent him by Siniavskii. On the contrary, they do much to deepen it and round out the picture.

The collective literary profile which has taken shape little by little over the past four decades is a valuable contribution to the gallery of figures who peopled the 'dark, magical night of the Stalinist dictatorship'.[85] It is of sociological interest both for the gap that it fills in the overall canvas of Soviet society, for, as Kabo stresses, Khmel'nitskii was no isolated case ('imia ikh — legion'),[86] and as an illustration of the corrosive effects on human society of such a venture as the Soviet experiment. At the same time, it is of literary interest for the links so often established with fictional and non-fictional characters from an earlier period, which in a sense anticipated the flowering of the *stukach* in the Soviet era.[87] In it the themes which haunted Soviet literature, and indeed society, for so long are richly elaborated. Personal loyalty and betrayal, the individual and the state, private values and resistance to the monolith: all are evident in the literature of this case.

A number of these sources were published in the guise of fiction. By their choice of genre they stake no claim to any objective 'truth', but like the best of non-documentary sources on the Stalinist period they have about them, in Miles Franklin's phrase, the 'unimpeachable

[84] Etkind, 'Ispoved' shenapana' (see note 38 above), pp. 233–34; Peltier, in a letter to Siniavskii, wrote 'Ты открыл мне планы МГБ и роль С. Хмельницкого, чтоб обмануть МГБ. Но самое главное то, что ты никогда не был «предателем». И это имело для меня не только личное значение': see her letter to Siniavskii in 'Zakliuchaia razgovor' (see note 25 above), p. 380.

[85] This phrase is used in 'Chto takoe sotsialisticheskii realizm?' in *Fantasticheskii mir Abrama Tertsa*, p. 401.

[86] Kabo, *Doroga v Avstraliiu*, p. 166.

[87] There is one other modern work devoted to a *donoschik* from the time of Pushkin, which may or may not have been inspired by the Khmel'nitskii story. This is Daniil Granin's article 'Sviashchennyi dar', *Novyi mir*, 11, 1971, pp. 181–210, in which he explores the theme of Mozart and Salieri, the coexistence of evil with genius and the behaviour and character of the writer and police spy Faddei Bulgarin. Whatever Granin's intentions, it is difficult to read his account of Bulgarin's activities, his links with the Decembrists, his visit to Ryleev shortly before the latter was arrested, his betrayal of Kiukhel'beker, without being vividly reminded of Khmel'nitskii in the accounts of Kabo and Siniavskii. I am grateful to my colleague Rosh Ireland for drawing my attention to Granin's essay.

veracity of fiction'.[88] Grekova's *Svezho predanie* is another such source. Although it does not deal with any of the individuals depicted by Siniavskii or Kabo, it confirms in fiction the method of recruitment of informers and the mode of behaviour required of them. Grekova's Nesterov refuses point-blank to collaborate and accepts the consequences; Siniavskii and Kabo go through the motions of consenting but by their actions undermine the all-pervasive MGB control; Khmel'nitskii, in almost all accounts, accepts his assignments with a will and exemplifies the required behaviour to perfection.

Galina Belaia reminds us of the enduring popularity in the late Soviet period of the slogan 'Strana dolzhna znat' svoikh palachei' and adds a variant, replacing 'palachei' by 'geroev', referring to Siniavskii and Daniel'.[89] To this we could add the sub-variant 'antigeroev', and bear in mind that a character in Solzhenitsyn's *V kruge pervom*, Bulatov, created at about the same time as Siniavskii's first stories, coined the aphorism 'Strana dolzhna znat' svoikh stukachei'.[90] Khmel'nitskii himself uses a variation on this theme — 'narod dolzhen znat' svoikh stukachei' — in his 'unmasking' of Siniavskii.[91] The works referred to above have done much to assist the fulfilment of this latter injunction, in which 'knowing' means not merely 'identifying' but understanding. They have together created an archetypal figure, larger than a mere individual, in which the most memorable features of several unlovable characters from earlier fiction — by no means all informers — are brought together and accentuated. These characters include Pechorin (less his Byronic appeal), Grushnitskii, the Underground Man, Stavrogin, Raskol'nikov (minus his meeker side) and Peredonov. The exposure initiated by Kabo and Bregel' in 1964 marked an important step in undermining the system which relied so heavily on *stukachestvo* and placed a premium upon the human failings which encouraged the phenomenon.

[88] Miles Franklin, quoted by Jill Kitson in 'My Brilliant Award' in *ABC Radio 24 Hours*, 1996 (April), p. 65. I am indebted to Marian Hill for drawing my attention to this. The remark was made (and quoted) without reference to Russian literature.
[89] G. A. Belaia, 'Da budet vedomo vsem . . .' in Velikanova (ed.), *Tsena metafory*, p. 14.
[90] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *V kruge pervom*, 2 vols, Moscow, 1991, II, p. 217.
[91] Khmel'nitskii, 'Iz chreva kitova', p. 153.